

REMARKS

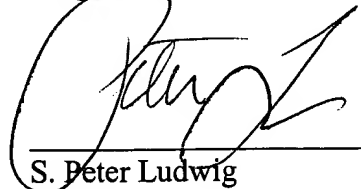
This application contains claims 1-12, 19-24, 26-40, 42-60, 62 and 63. Claims 13-18, 41 and 61 were withdrawn following a restriction requirement and are now canceled without prejudice. Claims 1-12, 19-24, 26-40, 42-49 and 62 are allowed. Reconsideration is respectfully requested with respect to claims 50-59 and 63.

Claims 50-59 and 63 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) over Porter (U.S. Patent 6,434,599). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Applicants submit herewith a Declaration under 37 CFR 1.131, proving that the present invention was conceived prior to the filing date of Porter (September 30, 1999), and that constructive reduction to practice of the invention proceeded with due diligence from a date prior to the filing date of Porter up to the date of filing of the present patent application on November 30, 1999. Consequently, Applicants respectfully submit that Porter may not be considered prior art against the present patent application.

Applicants have studied the additional references made of record by the Examiner and believe all the claims in the present patent application to be patentable over these references, whether taken individually or in any combination.

Applicants believe the remarks presented hereinabove to be fully responsive to all of the grounds of rejection raised by the Examiner. In view of these remarks, applicant respectfully submits that all of the claims in the present application are in order for allowance. Notice to this effect is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Peter Ludwig", is written over a horizontal line.

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